

Hurricane Information for the Marine Industry

1. The Captain of the Port (COTP) Mobile sends this information to the port community at the beginning of each hurricane season. The information discussed is based on lessons learned from previous hurricanes. Please review this document and, if necessary, revise your hurricane plans. Certain circumstances may require that the COTP make some provisions of this plan mandatory using the authority granted in 33 CFR 160 and 33 CFR 165. When this is necessary, affected parties will be notified via Broadcast Notice to Mariners, PEAT meetings, the COTP Mobile Voice Mail Announcement system, and the MSO Mobile Internet Site.
2. Each deep-water port in the COTP Mobile zone has a Port Emergency Action Team with a COTP Liaison. These teams will advise COTP Mobile regarding actions pertinent to the port, such as when to close/open the port. Your COTP Liaison will serve as your direct link to the COTP; they have no assignment during hurricanes other than to address port concerns. Please make every attempt to resolve port issues through your liaison prior to making contact with the COTP.
3. **Ports and waterways may be closed to commercial traffic prior to the landfall of a hurricane.** The closure is to ensure safety during and after heavy weather when communications might be severely damaged. This will allow time to complete bottom assessments and assess hazards to navigation prior to passage of commercial traffic. A port closure does not automatically mean that all vessels are required to leave port. Contact your PEAT liaison to express any needs or to request waivers.
4. The COTP believes that when sustained winds of forty-eight knots or greater are imminent, evasion at sea is the safest course of action for all seaworthy deep-draft vessels. The low elevations along the Gulf Coast offer limited protection from strong winds; sheltered berths and anchorages are limited. During a marginal threat, the COTP recommends that seaworthy deep-draft vessels await developments at anchorage to decrease the time required to reach open sea.
5. Shallow-draft vessels that intend to seek shelter upriver should anticipate drawbridges closing due to high winds and proceed upriver before being trapped on the south side of a bridge. A prudent mariner should know under what conditions the bridges in your area would close.
6. Permanently moored vessels and vessels in a laid-up status should have an updated hurricane plan on file with the COTP. Permanently moored vessels are expected to ensure moorings remain secure at the beginning of each hurricane season, and laid-up vessels must ensure that the COTP Waterways Management Branch is aware of all hurricane plans.
7. Barge fleets, particularly those carrying red-flag cargoes, should make every attempt to reduce barge fleet populations upon notification of an impending hurricane. Tender vessels should be positioned for quick recovery in the event of a breakaway.

8. After hurricane passage, the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will need to make assessments of all affected areas to ensure navigation safety. Know that both agencies have an excellent record of rapid recovery along the Gulf Coast and know that both are working long, hard hours to restore waterborne transportation as soon as possible. The COTP uses the following priorities for the assignment of resources:

- a. Restore and/or provide essential services and commodities to enhance, facilitate and carry out efforts to support/restore public safety.
- b. Security and protection of the environment.
- c. Commercial interest with focus on survey and reopening of waterways.

9. The following checklist may be of assistance and should be used as a guide for preparing for a hurricane.

HURRICANE SEASON (1 JUNE TO 30 NOVEMBER)

Review and update company and agency plans

Conduct an inspection of your facility/vessel.

Notify personnel and companies you need for response before and after the hurricane.

Plan to provide maximum stability on all vessels.

Plan to remove debris and missile hazards.

As much as possible, secure your dangerous cargoes inside. Always abide by the applicable regulations.

Double up mooring lines on barge fleets as much as possible. Ensure adequate head, breast, and stern wires are securely attached.

Each ship/tug company should consider maintaining at least one tug on standby for call-out assistance.

Arrange for tug assistance.

Oceangoing vessels are encouraged to clear the port.

Ballast down vessels. Put the outboard anchor at short stay. Maximize mooring lines. Maintain an engines readiness status, set a navigation watch, and set a listening watch on Channel 16 VHF-FM.

Inventory items needed to secure and double- up vessel.

Arrange to complete cargo handling operations at least 12 hours before the storm arrives.

Vessels and towboats with an arrival time of less than 12 hours prior to the time hurricane force winds are predicted should consider seeking shelter elsewhere.

Secure and account for dredge piping.

Load product storage tanks to optimum level for withstanding storms, winds, and flooding.

Outer continental shelf and MODU operators ensure evacuation plans and procedures are timely and adequate.

As the storm draws near, conduct a final inspection of your facility/vessel.

Conduct post storm damage surveys and report results to your local Harbormaster.

10. Information concerning the availability of ports and waterways can be obtained from the following sources:

a. **COTP PEAT Liaison:** This should be your primary source of information; the individual(s) assigned to this duty will be kept abreast of operations to the best of our abilities.

b. **COTP Mobile Voice Mail Announcement System:** A new service offered this year, as a pilot program, is a port status voice mail announcer. Recordings as to the current status of port and waterway closures will be available to multiple callers. The port community is encouraged to use this service if your COTP PEAT Liaison is out of reach. The message will be updated every 4 hours or whenever a major change has occurred in the status of a port. This phone number is **(334) 441-5080**.

c. **MSO Mobile Internet Site:** The COTP will use our Internet site to distribute hurricane-related information. This site will be continually updated with important information and you are encouraged to use the MSO Mobile Internet Site at the following address: *<http://www.uscg.mil/d8/mso/mobile>*